It would be seen from the proceedings of the past several sessions of the Assembly that the representatives of the people had been repeatedly urging for an Executive responsible to the Legislature. But the replies given on those occasions were invariably of an evasive character. While unhesitatingly admitting the importance of the question and the relevancy of the request, the former Dewans had attempted to shove the whole responsibility on the Sovereigns by saying that they would do the needful at the fit and proper time. The member hoped that under the altered conditions the constitutional progress of the State would not be hampered any further and that the aspirations of the people would be speedily realised.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Constitutional changes, Mr. Padmanabha Pillai, are bound to come in the near future; and your suggestions will doubtless be considered at the time.

180. The policy of retrenchment and reforms in the State.

MR. P. N. MADHAVAN PILLAI (*Trivandrum taluk, Group I*): said that the time had come when retrenchment of expenditure was a matter of utmost importance both to the Government and the people. The balancing of the budget was as much important as the lightening of the tax-payer's burden or finding ways and means to increase his paying capacity. The existing financial condition would necessitate a reduction by 8 per cent. in the total expenditure. Taking into account the irreducible items of expenditure such as the expenditure under Palace, Political, Defence, etc., an all round cut of 10 per cent. was essential. In case the lower ranks of the service were to be left untouched, the cut necessitated would be not less than 20 per cent. A relentless cut of at least 15 per cent. in the expenditure should therefore be effected immediately.

The most equitable of the taxes imposed on the people was income-tax. There was much scope for improving the collection under this item by preventing evasion of legitimate payments. Payment was evaded by merchants by maintaining duplicate account books, one for private use and another for production before the Income Tax authorities. The Government should insist on maintaining account books in forms approved by them, with the seal of the Income tax Officer on every page of the account book. One other important tax under direct taxation was land revenue. In spite of attempts to simplify and systematise the land tenures, complications still survived and glaring inequalities in the burden of taxation existed. *Rajabhogam* tax on alienated *jenmam* lands varied from one-eighth to one-fourth. A holder of land of the *otti-vilakkam* tenure had to pay a very heavy tax compared to his neighfour holding an equal extent of land under similar circumstances. Demand notices were often issued without making any personal demand. Sometimes it happened that the demand notices were for amounts less than the cost of notices themselves. The cost of establishment and of collection was 25 per cent. This should be reduced to 20 per cent.

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Under the Public Works Department, the establishment charges had been on the increase of late, though the expenditure had been considerably reduced. The basis of calculating the percentage of establishment charges was not correct, inasmuch as the cost of materials as well as the land compensation charges were included under the total expenditure. The design and supervision works were alone attended by the department, as the works were all done on contract system. The maintenance of roads was an easy task which could be looked after by skilled *maistries*. The services of Assistant Engineers could very well be dispensed with.

Large quantities of foreign salt were being imported every year for consumption in the State. This could be avoided by increasing the production of salt in the State. Salt was an article exempted from the provisions of the Interportal Trade Convention. But still its price was varying with the prices in British India from time to time.

The number of the unemployed in the State was increasing day by day and the number of school going children was diminishing from year to year. These facts proved the fall in the economic condition of the masses.

In order to reduce expenditure on education, primary education should be entrusted to private agencies, preferably to charitable institutions. The amounts of grants should be fixed on the basis of the number of pupils receiving instruction in the 3rd and 4th classes in each school. This scheme, if worked out, would also obviate the necessity of making primary education compulsory. A number of Assistant Inspectors could be dispensed with. They could be absorbed as teachers in high schools or as headmasters of English and vernacular middle schools.

The salaries of officers should be substantially reduced. They were much higher than what was actually required for the necessaries of life. Reduction in salaries would make public service less attractive and much of the existing communal discord would also vanish. Officers whose services were borrowed from foreign Governments should be placed under the category of experts and the number of such officers should be minimised as far as practicable.

As regards constitutional reforms, the member said that great political changes were about to take place in British India and to fall in line with the rest of India it was absolutely necessary that the State should have a responsible form of government. Steps should therefore be taken to effect the necessary changes to pave the way for it. In every monarchical State a bicameral legislature was absolutely necessary. When the necessary reforms were effected in the constitution of the Assembly, this would become an accomplished fact.

DEWAN'S REPLY: The Retrenchment Committee, Mr. Madhavan Pillai, is still working. Some of its suggestions have been brought into effect, and others are pending orders. In the case of some departments, enquiries still remain to be made. Your suggestions will also be considered.

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As I said to Mr. Padmanabha Pillai, when constitutional changes are being considered, your suggestions too will be examined.

181. Administrative reforms.

MR. S. JANARDANAN NAYAR (*Nedumangad taluk*) said that the Travancore State occupied a unique position in India in the matter of civilisation and educational advancement. Among the Indian States, Travancore occupied the 7th place in area, the 3rd place in population and the 1st place in point of literacy. It was high time that responsible government was established in the State, especially in view of the possibility of immediate grant of *swaraj* to British India and a Federation for the whole of the Indian Empire, in order to enable her to join the Federation.

The existing Legislative Council and the Assembly should be immediately reformed and remodelled. Both the institutions required thorough overhauling. The practice of nominating members to the Council and the Assembly should be abolished. The franchise should be broadened. A few seats should be reserved to be filled in by nomination from among the minority communities. Both the institutions should have elected Presidents. The Council and the Assembly should have power to elect two members each from among the elected members, as ministers, who should be made responsible to the bodies electing them. The period of the Council and of the Assembly should be 3 years or 5 years, the election for both the bodies being conducted simultaneously. The Assembly should be placed on a statutory basis. It should be invested with additional powers and privileges, such as asking interpellations, passing resolutions, discussing and passing the annual budget and the election of ministers. The constitution of an Executive Council was unnecessary as it would involve much additional expenditure, thereby increasing the burden of the tax-payer. The elected ministers should have no pay. They should be given only an honorarium of Rs. 5,000 each per annum.

The public service required immediate and thorough remodelling. The number and pay of the high-paid officers should be considerably reduced. The pay of the subordinate service should be enhanced. The maximum salary of an officer should be fixed at Rs. 500 per mensem and the minimum pay of an officer of the subordinate service at Rs. 15 per mensem. The pay of the teachers of vernacular schools, of the copyists and peons in courts and offices, of the Police constables and of the Excise, and Anchal peons and of Forest Guards, was miserably low and was responsible for corruption, discontent, poverty and insubordination among them. Their pay should therefore be enhanced. The number of high officers was large and their pay high. The axe of retrenchment should be applied both for reducing the number and pay of these officers. There was no use in reducing the number of low-paid subordinates. The pay of the Dewan could be reduced to Rs. 1,500. An immediate reduction of 20 per cent. of the salary should be made in the case of officers drawing a pay of Rs. 100

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